

THE FOOD RIOTS

Wilkinson, Marguerite, 1883-1928

With wealth of the autumn the fruit trees were heavy--
 With burden of red and with burden of gold;
The vines of the vineyard were strong in their bearing,
 The olive-trees faithful, the apple-trees bold;
The wide fields were brave with the ripe yellow grain,
 From the coast to the coast, North and South, far and wide,
 And great was the harvest to nourish our pride,
Heaped high in the barns, filling train after train.

*But women are crying,
 "Give food or we die--
The markets are full
 But the poor cannot buy--
Give milk for our babies
 And meat for our men
And bread that our bodies
 May labor again!"*

The cattle have bred and the flocks are increasing,
 The fowl have sent fledglings abroad in the air;
The fish come in schools to the shores of the ocean
 Or leap in white streams for the people to share.
The valleys are rich and the groves on the hills,
 Oh, fat is the land, East and West, far and wide,
 And fair are the prairies and great is our pride
In the bounty that quickens, the beauty that thrills.

*But poor is the people
 Whose women must cry,
"We work, but we starve--
 Give us food, or we die!
Give milk for our babies
 And meat for our man
And bread that our bodies
 May labor again!"*